(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the details of assistance being provided to farmers from the Rubber Board?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) The estimated area under rubber cultivation in the country, at the end of 1996-97 was 5,33,000 ha.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. During the 9th Plan period, the Rubber Board targets to bring additional 35,000 ha. under rubber cultivation in the non-traditional areas.

(d) The Rubber Board provides free technical assistance to all categories of growers at all stages of rubber planting, maintenance, harvesting, processing of latex, etc.

Apart from this, planting grant @ Rs. 8,000/- per ha. for growers owning up to 2 ha. in traditional areas and upto 5 ha. in non-traditional areas and also incentive for use of advance Planting materials @ Rs. 3,000/- and Rs. 4,000/- per ha. for general and SC/ST category of growers, are also given to the growers.

In addition to the above, the Board also renders financial assistance to growers under different extension schemes for the scientific upkeep of plantations and proper processing of latex produced from rubber plantations.

Meeting at Geneva Over Indian Import

1616. SHRI L. RAMANA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) the outcome of talks held recently at Geneva between India and its major partners contract over Indian Import on consumer and other goods; and

(b) revised plan to face the situation as well as objections raised ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) and (b) As per the decision taken at the meeting of the Committee on Balance of Payments Restrictions of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) held on 20-21 January, 1997, India presented a plan for the elimination of quantita-tive restrictions maintained for balance of payments purposes to the WTO on 19 May, 1997. This Plan was considered at the resumed consultations with India of this Committee on 10-11 June, 1997, when due to divergence of opinion among Members of the Committee on the length of the plan and on the issue of disinvocation of balance of payments cover by India, it was agreed to suspend the deliberations till 30 June -.1 July, 1997.

At the resumed consultations also divergence of views on the overall time period of plan and on the number of tariff lines to be freed during the earlier years of the plan persisted. The resumed consultations concluded without consensus on 30 June -1 July, 1997.

Australia, Canada the European Communities, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United States of America, in separate requests, have sought formal consultations with India under Article XXII of GATT 1994 and the Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes (DSU) alleging that continued maintenance of quantitative restrictions on imports for balance of payments purposes by India when there have been improvements in India's balance of payments is inconsistent with India's obligations under the WTO. India has accepted the requests for consultations.

Review on Flow of Credit to Small Scale Industries

1617. SHRI BHAGWAN SHANKAR RAWAT : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Public Sector Banks particularly the Bank of Baroda have been asked to review the progress of action plan announced by the Government in the budget regarding flow of credit to Small Scale Industries; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b) The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reported that all the public sector banks including Bank of Baroda were advised by it to implement the Seven Point Action Plan to improve the flow of credit to Small Scale Industries. (SSI) Sector announced in the Budget for the year 1995-96. Banks have also been advised by RBI to send monthly progress reports. Progress made in the implementation of the Plan is being reviewed periodically by RBI.

Cotton Control Orders

1610. SHRI YELLAIAH NANDI : Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government propose to modify the Cotton Control Orders, 1986;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by what time the final decision is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) to (c) : A Bill has been introduced in the Lok Sabha on 25th July, 1997 to repeal the Cotton Ginning and Pressing Factories Act, 1925, as amended. With the repeal of said Act, in need be, the Cotton Control Order, 1986 may be amended.

[Translation]

J.K. Jute Mills

1619. SHRI JAGAT VIR SINGH DRONA : Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state :